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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
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The snow is all gone! The temperature has reached 60 degrees or higher for
a few days. We can open the windows and get some fresh air. Spring has
finally arrived! It's so refreshing to start to feel renewed, of sorts.
Now I can plan some outdoor projects to get outside and enjoy the weather.
And, it will still be cool enough to get some stuff indoors. Best of both
worlds, I guess.

I don't know, maybe it has something to do with the fact that I'm getting a
little older. But, I've found over the past few years that it's the small
things in life that provide the most pleasure. When I was younger, I really
didn't care about the seasons other than how it would affect where and how I
socialized. Now, I look at them and wonder differently. Winter, I start to
dread cleaning up the snow. Spring and Summer, what to do to with regard to
making things grow. Fall, watching everything prepare for seasonal
hibernation. Maybe it's weird.

Like my Atari computers. Sure, I have some reasonably modern PCs in the
house in which I use to be more productive in a quicker fashion. But it's
my Falcon and Stacy that I use for simple enjoyment. They're like old
friends that I can't seem to part with after all this time. The small
things in life, I guess. Enjoy them while you can - you'll feel better!

Until next time...

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                    AtarICQ 0.164 Released

Hi all,

Time has come to release yet a new version of AtarICQ and as usual you
can expect both a good amount of smaller fixes as well as some new
additions.

The most apparent change is that you can now specify that aICQ sorts
the contacts in your contact list in alphabetical order. Another visual

change is the ability to remove the online/offline separators.

The routines dealing with buffering/logging of chat and system messages
has been refined, curing a couple of glitches related to this. AtarICQ
users talking to people using some ICQ clones may also be happy to hear
that aICQ will now interpret also a single ascii-10 (lf) as a rowbreak.

Do give the new release a go, and don't hesitate to send feedback!

AtarICQ webpage: http://www.ataricq.org

Here is a more thorough list of things that are new or changed in 0.164:

* Made latest additions to colour settings in prefs/msg window/ work
  with colour selector
* Greyed out non-accessible entries in popup menus
* Improved unicode support (still truncates to 7 byte ascii for now)
* Make storing of unread encoded messages to disk work too
* Fixed the invisible "set away when idle" setting in preferences
  (A MagiC-only prob, due to its weird rendering of 3d-objects)
* Added possibility to remove the online/offline separators (For Ralph!)
* Make shell logging work for encoded messages
* Fixed glitch: No typing icon in contact list when online icon is disabled
* "Request authorization" is back in contact list popup menu
* Do not log (shell.log) old unread messages again, when they are reloaded
  from disk!
* When adding several contacts from server side list at a time, not all
  contacts info was retrieved. (Retrieving queue broken) Fixed now!
* Fixed problem with default colours not being adjusted for tab scheme
* Allow a single ascii 10 (lf) to trigger a row break (fixed probs with
  quirky icq clones)
* Alphabetical sorting of contacts is possible. Also note that contacts
  coming online/offline are reported into system message tab.
* No limit for number of tabs allowed (increase array size on the fly)
* Cured a bug which prevented status icon on a tab from being updated
  properly if a contact in a non-active tab went offline.
* Worked around a bug in MagiC:s window (un)shading

+ Many smaller corrections and additions that were made along the
way...

Have fun!

Regards,

Joakim

http://www.ataricq.org
http://topp.atari-users.net
http://xaaes.atariforge.net

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                          PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                        compiled by Joe Mirando
                           joe@atarinews.org

[Editor's note: Due to e-mail issues, this week's PAT column will not
appear]

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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - Halo2 For Xbox In June!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Nintendo World Store!
                                     Hackers Add To PSP!
                                     And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
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           Halo 2 Xbox Multiplayer Map Pack Slated for June Release

Console gaming will never be the same again, as Microsoft Game Studios has
announced a June 28 release date for the highly anticipated Halo 2
Multiplayer Map Pack. The multiplayer expansion pack, which is the first of
its kind for a console title, contains nine new multiplayer maps to push
gamers' skills to their limits. The retail package also contains two new
videos: an animated side-story from the single-player story in New Mombasa
and a mini-documentary that includes interviews with the map designers,
combat strategies and fly-throughs of the new maps. The retail pack also
allows gamers who prefer offline play via system link and split-screen to
upgrade their Halo 2 experience with new maps. The retail version of the
Halo 2 Multiplayer Map Pack carries a suggested retail price of $19.99
(U.S.).

As a special bonus, Xbox Live subscribers will get an early chance to check
out four maps from the Halo 2 Multiplayer Map Pack in late April. Two maps,
Containment and Warlock, will be presented by Mountain Dew at no cost to
Xbox subscribers. Two additional maps, Sanctuary and Turf, can be purchased
via Xbox Live for $5.99 (U.S.). To complete the Map Pack collection,
subscribers can download the five remaining maps on June 28 for $11.99
(U.S.).

Set in a Forerunner environment on Delta Halo, Containment is a massive,
icy outdoor environment suitable for vehicle combat and large team
objective games such as Capture the Flag. Warlock, a small to midsized
indoor arena set in ancient Forerunner ruins, offers ample opportunities
for a variety of gametypes such as Territories, Slayer, Team Slayer and
more. Located in the streets of Old Mombasa near the wreckage of a downed
Covenant Scarab, Turf is a midsize asymmetrical urban combat environment
with narrow streets, dark alleyways and heavily defended buildings. The

sunlit remains of an ancient Forerunner temple, Sanctuary is a medium-sized symmetrical environment excellent for Capture the Flag, Assault, Territories and Slayer games.

More information on the individual maps and the Multiplayer Map Pack can be found at http://www.bungie.net.

Halo 2, the most popular Xbox game to date, has sold more than 6.5 million copies worldwide since its November 2004 release. Launched to critical and consumer acclaim, the game has earned more than a dozen awards, including several for "Game of the Year," "Best Soundtrack" and "Best Shooter."

Pushing the Xbox hardware to its very limits, Halo 2 expands on everything that made the original game great, while adding a wealth of technological and gameplay advances. Significantly improved graphics, enhanced artificial intelligence (AI), an advanced real-time lighting engine and destructible interactive environments are just a small part of Halo 2's evolution of design and technology. Every improvement in Halo 2 is designed to take gameplay to a new level - and in the end, to tell a more compelling story.

Utilizing Xbox Live to redefine online play, Halo 2 delivers superior online multiplayer capabilities. Whether playing with a clan on a new multiplayer map, boarding a friend's Warthog, dogfighting in Banshees or checking player stats, brings the social experience to a higher level via Xbox Live. More information about Halo 2 is available at http://www.halo2.com/.

Rise of the Kasai Ships For Playstation 2

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced today the release of Rise of the Kasai, exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system. The sequel to the critically acclaimed The Mark of Kri is developed by BottleRocket Entertainment Inc., who set out to make Rise of the Kasai stand out from other games by offering a unique single-player cooperative fighting system and a rich story that spans different time periods told through new playable characters and beautiful watercolor painted in-game movies.

Rise of the Kasai offers four playable characters in an intense single-player AI-assisted cooperative gameplay setting. The unique collaborative gameplay pairs the gamer with a fellow warrior, making teamwork essential to sneak, plan and fight one's way through breathtaking, culturally-inspired environments.

"We have leveraged our individual experiences in animation and game development to make Rise of the Kasai an engrossing and dynamic experience," said Jonathan Beard, president of BottleRocket Entertainment Inc. "Players can expect a visually stunning and innovative combat game that produces golden gaming moments - moments where both you and the computer work together to inflict satisfying carnage or times when your AI buddy reigns down arrows on your assailants at just the right moment."

Rau, the noble warrior from the Mark of Kri returns with his marked sister, Tati, who is now a 20-year-old rebel returning the favor of her brother's protection by fighting the denizens alongside him in order to preserve the family's future. A new duo of playable characters, Baumusu, Rau's trainer, and Griz, the eldest and most revered of the known living Rakus, is also

available to the player.

Throughout the 10 captivating levels, players will gather key plot details through the bird, Kuzo, who also serves as Rau's spirit guide, as well as through newly designed watercolor style paintings and animated in-game movies.

In each of the fighting stages, gamers will select one of the two characters available for the level (Rau or Tati, Baumusu or Griz) and the other becomes the players' computer-controlled buddy, who will fight alongside or break off to secure his or her own objectives. Using the right analog stick, up to nine opponents in the player's immediate proximity range can be locked onto and attacked or disarmed using a projectile, melee, short-range or other weapon specific to the selected character. Once an enemy is targeted, an icon will appear above its head and hitting the corresponding button will engage the player in battle, and any button not assigned can be added to perform a lethal combo. Each level can be replayed as the opposite character, allowing the player to experience all aspects of the game from a completely different point of view.

A remote view is available to observe the computer partner in action, but unless a red raven flashes on the screen indicating help is needed, the player can trust that the AI companion is on the right path to completing his or her own level objectives. Level maps are also accessible, offering a visual reference of characters' location and the level layout.

Gamers embark upon the epic journey by first playing through events that took place 10 years prior to beginning of The Mark of Kri (denoted by a sepia-tone color level design) to learn that Rau has been killed. The story then fast forwards to the following decade when a series of new spells have taken hold by the Kasai sect, who aim to bring together the Kri mark residing in the form of tattoos on human flesh of the Rakus, which would trigger widespread evil across the land. In Rise of the Kasai, the player must battle the past in order to preserve the future.

Rise of the Kasai is available for exclusively for PlayStation 2 for a suggested retail price of $39.99. To increase excitement and awareness for the title, a substantial marketing campaign that includes print and online advertising, retail support, sampling opportunities on the PlayStation truck, a direct mailing program, and dedicated Web site is in effect.

BloodRayne Coming To Playstation Portable This Fall

Gamers will finally get their hands on gaming's hottest leading lady, as Majesco, an innovative provider of diversified products and content for digital entertainment platforms , today announced that its popular BloodRayne action/horror series is in development for the PSP handheld entertainment system. BloodRayne PSP is being developed by Full Fat and will make its handheld debut this fall.

"BloodRayne has built a loyal following of fans and established herself as one of interactive entertainment's most popular action heroines," said Ken Gold, Vice President of Marketing for Majesco. "We're thrilled to see our franchise expand into the handheld arena and believe its fast-paced acrobatic combat will make BloodRayne PSP a must-have game for PSP owners."

Born from the unnatural union of vampire and human, BloodRayne is blessed

with the powers of a vampire but cursed with the unquenchable thirst for
blood and a weakness to sunlight. BloodRayne PSP will explore BloodRayne's
own purpose and history, explaining and resurrecting 'dead' characters from
previous games while developing new characters specifically for the PSP.

Additionally, BloodRayne PSP features two-player, co-op wireless
multiplayer with a playable second character. Players engage in extremely
brutal combat with a unique "kill system" based on racking up high scores
by linking chains and combos, and gaining valuable bonus multipliers. The
"kill system" also allows players to develop their character by unlocking
devastating new moves.

BloodRayne PSP will be unveiled during the Electronic Entertainment Expo
(E3) being held May 18-20 in the Los Angeles Convention Center, booth 846
in the South Hall, in Los Angeles, CA.

                        Spy vs. Spy Ships for Xbox

Global Star Software, a publishing label of Take-Two Interactive Software,
Inc., announced that Spy vs. Spy for the Xbox video game system from
Microsoft is now available in retail stores across North America.

Featuring eight action-packed single and multiplayer game modes, Spy vs.
Spy lets gamers take on the roles of the diabolical spies from MAD
Magazine's beloved long-running comic strip. In addition to split-screen
offline multiplayer, Spy vs. Spy allows up to four people to participate
in wild online skirmishes with support for Xbox Live.

Spy vs. Spy is rated T for teen and is available in retail stores now for a
suggested retail price of $19.99.

                Nintendo Plans First World Store in New York

Japanese videogame maker Nintendo Co. Ltd. on Wednesday said it would open
its first-ever Nintendo World Store in New York this spring, stepping up
efforts to extend the reach of its popular gaming machines in a key market.

The store will take over the space that housed Nintendo's Pokemon Center in
Manhattan's Rockefeller Center, the company said in a statement.

A Nintendo spokesman said the new store was under construction and more
details on it would be disclosed in about two weeks.

"Visitors will enjoy two floors of all things Nintendo, such as games,
merchandise, accessories, DVDs and trading cards for the wildly popular
Pokemon franchise," the statement said.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!

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Hackers Add Web, Chat to PSP Video Game Player

Sony Corp.'s new PlayStation Portable is turning into a great tool for Web
browsing, comics reading and online chat - and it also happens to play
video games, movies and music, if you prefer that sort of thing.

The $249 PSP handheld video game player went on sale in the United States
on March 24, and it took very little time before techies added the kinds
of functions to the PSP that Sony did not include - and may never have
intended. One man needed only 24 hours to get a working client for Internet
Relay Chat, or IRC, an older messaging platform.

"I was on IRC, and someone mentioned how cool it would be to use their PSP
on Wi-Fi at Starbucks to talk to people over IRC. I said, 'I can do that',
so I began working on it immediately," said Robert Balousek, creator of
PSPIRC (http://www.pspirc.com), in an email interview.

Balousek said as many as 100,000 people may have visited the IRC client,
and he is starting work on a new project that would let PSP users chat on
the AOL Instant Messenger network.

Hacking new video game hardware is old hat - rare is the console that does
not get its own version of the Linux operating system from enterprising
developers. But the gaming and hacking communities embraced the PSP with
speed rarely seen in the console world - a nod, perhaps, to its
portability.

Other "hacks" include a way to transfer TV shows recorded by the TiVo
digital video recorder to the PSP
(http://www.zatznotfunny.com/ttg.htm#psp); a program for reading ebooks,
(http://gamefries.blogspot.com/2005/03/how-to-get-e-books-on-your-psp.html); and
 a viewer for comics downloaded from the Internet
(http://www.8bitjoystick.com/archives/jake_how_to_read_web_
comics_on_a_playstation_portable.php).

Much of the new PSP functionality comes from using the Web browser built
into the racing game "Wipeout Pure," which was meant to go to a Sony site.
By changing some of the PSP's network settings, the browser can be pointed
to an Internet portal.

A number of people have already set up such portals, formatted to fit in
the PSP's screen and offering links and a place to enter Web addresses. The
technology blog Engadget has rounded up a number of those links.

Sony Computer Entertainment of America, the Japanese conglomerate's U.S.
gaming unit, did not respond to requests for comment.

But the tinkerers suggest Sony probably did not have their work in mind
when they released the PSP. Balousek said the company had only left small
loopholes for outsiders to use.

The development community wishes that would change, as evidenced by an
open plea to Sony posted April 5 on the Web site PS2dev.org
(http://www.ps2dev.org), which is dedicated to the development of
open-source software projects for the PS2.

"I suggest to Sony that they should work with us to develop a method to allow home-brew software" using technology to protect Sony copyrights," the site's editor "Oobles" wrote.

Web Surf, Watch Video on PSP

In the PlayStation Portable, Sony Corp. has produced a magnificent piece of hardware. It's so fine that using it just for games seems a pity.

Here are some ways to unlock PSP capabilities that Sony neglected to tell you about, culled from various enthusiast Web sites. With them, you can Web surf, watch video and read e-books.

None of these "hacks" involve modifying the hardware or installing unlicensed software on the PSP (which would void your warranty), though the last two require that you install software on your PC.

WEB BROWSER

The PSP comes with a built-in Wi-Fi antenna that lets you to play games with other PSP users nearby. It also connects to the Internet but there's not much you can do with that connection - the gadget has no built-in e-mail program or Web browser.

However, the game "Wipeout Pure" contains a rudimentary Web browser. It's only there to access a single page, containing game updates, so to gain access to the wider Web a bit of trickery is required.

You need to be close to a Wi-Fi hotspot for this to work.

1. On the PSP, go to Network Settings.

2. Select Infrastructure mode. Create a new connection and give it a name.

3. Enter the name, or SSID, of the Wi-Fi hotspot and the password if necessary.

4. Select the Custom address setting. You can usually leave IP Address Setting to Automatic.

5. For DNS Setting, select Manual. Enter the Primary DNS 67.171.70.72. This points to a computer set up by Jonathan Terleski, a student at Carnegie Mellon. It replaces the Sony page with a page that has links to Google, Yahoo and other useful sites.

6. Set it not to use a proxy.

7. Save the network settings. Make sure the Wi-Fi switch on the left side of the PSP is on.

8. Fire up "Wipeout Pure." Go to the Downloads section and select the connection you just created. That should take you online, unless traffic is overwhelming the portal page. If it doesn't work immediately, try a few hours later.

Not all pages will work in the browser, but hey: you have a PSP and you're

online. If that doesn't make you happy, what will?

If you want to take the PSP even further, click on a link on the portal page to use it with Internet Relay Chat. Typing is quite slow with the onscreen keyboard, however.

In an e-mail, Terleski said he gets quite a bit of fan mail after setting up the portal.

"It wasn't that challenging technically, but I can understand other's reactions; the first time you see Google or your own web-log load up on a PSP, it's really an exciting moment," Terleski wrote.

He plans to keep the portal going at least until Sony releases a proper browser. That time is not far off: A South Korean version of the PSP, to be launched next month, will come with a Web browser and players for online music and videos.

WATCH YOUR MOVIES

The PSP can play movies from a Memory Stick, but only in the MPEG-4 format, which is used by some digital cameras. Here's how to convert your movies and get them on to the device. You'll need a USB A to mini-B cable, available at electronics stores for around $20. For a 90-minute movie, you will probably need a 512-megabyte Memory Stick.

1. On your Windows PC, Download and install 3GP Converter, a free program, from http://www.nurs.or.jp/calcium/3gpp/ (The page is in Japanese, but don't be daunted, just click on the link that says "3GP_Converter031.zip" to download). You can also use Sony's Image Converter 2 program, but it costs $19.99.

2. Run 3GP and switch it to English. Select the video format "Customized: MP4, for PSP (Direct, renamed)."

3. Drag and drop video files to the 3GP window. They will be saved as .MP4 files with odd file names on your hard drive. Don't rename them.

4. Connect your PSP to the computer using the USB cable. Navigate to the USB Connection option under Settings to activate it. A folder that displays the contents of your Memory Stick should open on the computer.

5. Create a folder on the Memory Stick called "MP(underscore)ROOT." Under it, create another folder called "100MNV01." Copy the .MP4 files there. You don't need the .THM files also created by 3GP converter.

Why the odd file and folder names? Ask Sony.

6. On the PSP, navigate to Video and Memory Stick, where your movies should show up.

READ E-BOOKS

One day, you're going to be tired of all those games. Classics of world literature to the rescue! Getting e-books on the PSP is quite a process because the device doesn't read text files or PDFs. Here's how to get around that:

1. Download and install SoftCopy from www.dobysoft.com. It costs $39.95 but is free to try for 30 days. It installs as a printer that "prints" JPEG

image files to your hard drive.

2. In Windows, go to Printers and Faxes. Go to File: Server Properties and create a new Form, or paper size. Make it 4.8 inches by 2.8 inches. Name it "PSP."

3. Get an e-book in .TXT or .DOC format. Www.gutenberg.org is a good place. Open the file in Microsoft Word or another word processing program.

4. Select the whole text and change the font size to 9.

5. Under File:Page Setup select the PSP paper size. Set the margins to 0.1 inch.

6. Under File, select Print. Chose SoftCopy as the printer. Click properties and set the resolution to 100 dpi.

7. Go back to the main Print window and print the JPEGs to a folder.

8. Connect your PSP to the computer using the USB cable. Navigate to the USB Connection option under Settings to activate it. A folder that displays the contents of your Memory Stick should open on the computer.

9. Go to the PSP folder on the Memory Stick and copy the image files to the Photo folder. A 32-megabyte memory stick should have space for 850 pages, which works out to about 260 letter-size pages.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Study Shows Microsoft, Linux Neck-And-Neck

Most U.S. businesses say there is very little difference between the cost of maintaining a Windows versus a Linux-based corporate computing environment, according to a new Yankee Group study released on Monday.

The main cost difference, said Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio, is determined by the amount of time it takes to develop applications or ensure the security of servers, the networked computers that store data, crunch numbers and serve up Web pages.

"What we found is that costs are not really dependent on the underlying functionality in the core operating system," DiDio said.

In the independent study, 88 percent of respondents said that the quality, performance and reliability of Windows was equal to or better than Linux.

Linux, which can be copied and modified freely, unlike proprietary software such as Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system, has been locked in competition for the last several years against Microsoft's Windows Server

software for a share of the corporate market.

In most cases, both Linux and Windows are growing at the expense of Sun Microsystems Inc.'s Unix-based servers, which were instrumental in the growth of the Internet during the 1990s.

DiDio said that most companies - whether large or small - rarely take the huge step of replacing one operating system with another. Instead, they usually add a mix of Windows and Linux server software to expand functionality.

"Server operating systems are largely commoditized," DiDio said, adding that many companies were not tracking their operating costs closely enough to base their decisions on total cost of ownership, or TCO, the main cost metric when comparing Linux and Windows.

Matthew Szulik, chief executive of Red Hat Inc., the largest provider of update and support services for Linux, said, however, "Some of our customers track their operating costs down to the penny.."

Microsoft had no immediate comment on the survey.

In terms of security, Yankee Group's survey showed a sharp rise in companies' assessment of Microsoft's security level, bringing it closer to perceived security level of Linux.

On a scale of 1 to 10, companies rated Microsoft's security at 7.6, double the rating in a similar survey conducted last year. Linux's rating was mostly the same at 8.3.

DiDio said that Microsoft's shift to a monthly security update cycle and increased efforts to combat security issues were the main drivers behind its new ratings.

Another key issue for companies was the cost of developing applications or other programs that run on networked computers. DiDio said that software tools such as Microsoft's Visual Studio helped to boost the appeal of the Windows platform.

Overall, however, most companies were content with extracting the most use out of their existing networks and adding Windows or Linux server as needed, depending on specific tasks and needs.

"Corporations need more of a reason to move than they need to stay with a platform that they're on," DiDio said.

Microsoft Expands Anti-Linux Campaign

Microsoft is expanding its "Get the Facts" campaign against Linux by talking about the reliability of Windows versus Linux systems, a company executive said this week at the Open Source Business Conference here.

Get the Facts is a marketing effort by Microsoft that compares Windows favorably with Linux and other open source software products. Microsoft launched the campaign in mid-2003 and has gradually expanded its scope to now include: total cost of ownership, security, indemnification, and, the latest addition, reliability.

"Reliability has been challenging for us. It is an area that has been very noisy," says Martin Taylor, general manager of platform strategy at Microsoft. "Customers say that reliability is very important to them and that they are hearing that Linux and Unix are more reliable than Windows."

In the absence of a clear definition of reliability or benchmarks, Microsoft commissioned a study that pitted Windows Server 2003 against Red Hat Enterprise Linux 3.0 AS. As part of the study, 18 Linux and 18 Windows system administrators were hired to run the simulated IT environments of a midsized company over a four day period.

"This is about end user uptime and how easy it is to configure and maintain a reliable environment," Taylor says.

The administrators had to troubleshoot intentionally introduced errors and conduct tasks such as configuring new devices, making backups and setting up remote access. Linux and Windows ran on three Hewlett-Packard ProLiant DL380 G3 servers. One was used as an infrastructure server, one as an e-mail server and one as a file and print server.

"We found that the Linux environment provided about 15 percent more end user loss of productivity," Taylor says. Over the 26 hour test period spread over four days, the Red Hat systems had services down for 4 hours, 59 minutes, and 44 seconds, while the Windows system had users waiting for services for 4 hours, 20 minutes, and 19 seconds, according to a copy of the study, which was conducted by VeriTest.

Additionally, the study found that the Windows administrators were able to complete more assigned tasks than their Linux counterparts. Also, the troubleshooting was easier on Windows, according to the study. On the Windows side the administrators needed 33 percent less in average total time to do their tasks than on the Linux side, the study says.

Linux administrators ran into a number of issues including a lack of integration, bad documentation, missing drivers, and update patches that caused trouble, Taylor says. Also, Windows warned the administrators when the system was low on memory, for example, allowing them to act, while the Linux system did not, resulting in system downtime, Taylor says.

But open source advocate Bruce Perens disputes the notion that Windows is more reliable than Linux and gives a simple example: computer viruses.

"Look at the viruses. Every day my mailbox gets 30 Windows viruses in it. They come from systems that have already been infected and are just sending out viruses to everyone they know. And that is not happening to the same extent for Linux or open source software," he says.

According to Perens, open source software will always be less prone to virus attacks because it was designed to be connected to the Internet. "Microsoft is still catching up with that," he says.

Having compared "apples to apples," Microsoft's Taylor says that he feels good about Microsoft's reliability story.

However, in real life Windows and Linux are not used for the same type of tasks, according to an independent Yankee Group survey of 509 IT users released earlier this week. The hourly cost of Windows downtime in actual user environments is three to four times higher than that of Linux downtime, according to Yankee Group.

Windows downtime is more expensive because the operating system is used for more crucial tasks in businesses when compared with Linux servers, according to the Yankee Group survey. Users also told the researchers that Windows and Linux security are nearly equal and that Windows recovers 30 percent faster from attacks than Linux servers.

Furthermore, according to Yankee Group, Linux is not displacing Windows in server rooms, but most users are installing Linux servers parallel with Windows servers.

Microsoft plans to use the reliability data it got from the VeriTest study in new ads, Taylor says.

Longhorn Delayed Again - Who Wins?

In the last few weeks, the tech industry has been buzzing with speculation that Microsoft's next OS release, Longhorn, will not be ready for its planned 2006 unveiling.

If the OS is put off until 2007, some competitors could win more profits, but many analysts say that software and hardware partners will face the most serious challenges and could end up losing more than they anticipated.

This is not the first time Longhorn has had rumors about delay swirling around it, but because some of those rumors have come true, many in the industry are waiting to see if 2006 really will be the year of Longhorn - or if they need to take their business elsewhere.

If Longhorn is put off by a few quarters, the most likely candidates to win an edge over Microsoft will be the developers of alternative operating systems and their vendors, such as Novell, Red Hat, Apple and others.

"The open-source world would be ecstatic to have a Longhorn delay," said Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio. "They'll see it as Linux having two years to get its ducks lined up in a row, and more time to erode Microsoft's market share."

Although other operating systems have very limited adoption when compared to Microsoft's tight clamp on the market, a Longhorn delay could create an opening.

"At this point, Microsoft has to be very careful about keeping its customers informed and sticking to a roadmap," said DiDio. "Whenever there's a delay of any kind, you have to worry about competition."

While competitors might benefit, Microsoft's partners would probably suffer, according to META Group analyst Steve Kleynhans.

"If there's another delay, I think the PC industry en masse would descend on Redmond like a lynch mob," he said. "It needs to hit the streets before the end of 2006 for the holiday season, and companies already have that in their sales projections."

Even if Longhorn is pushed back by a quarter or two, it would hurt partners because they would have missed an important selling season, noted Kleynhans.

"Microsoft is highly motivated to make sure Longhorn ships in a timely fashion, so people don't have to postpone the rate at which revenue comes in," he said. "That means they'll probably start trimming things out of the OS just to get it out the door."

Although competitors might be eager for Longhorn developers to drag their feet, analysts are not convinced that it will make a significant impact on most enterprise customers.

"By this time, companies are used to delay, so they're not sitting around waiting for Longhorn before going through with their strategies," said IDC analyst Roger Kay.

Many companies are likely to wait while Longhorn is out for at least a year before bringing it into the enterprise, Kay predicted. "We're at least three years away from corporate adoption on a large scale," he said.

Despite the wait-and-see attitude, enterprise customers are anticipating using Longhorn, which might limit competitor success even if the release date changes. "I don't see a delay as an opportunity for Linux or other vendors," he said. "Not unless Microsoft suddenly falls apart and doesn't deliver it at all. But I don't see that happening."

Kleynhans noted that, Whether or not Longhorn meets its release date, companies should be ready not just for the OS, but also for what will follow it.

"Longhorn is a massive undertaking because it makes incredible changes to how applications interact with the OS without shutting off the existing world," he said. "It would be fair to say no one has ever undertaken software change as big as this before."

Because it will represent an overwhelming shift, Kleynhans expects a stream of Longhorn-related products coming into the market after the OS release, both from Microsoft and from other vendors.

"There's going to be a lot of churn in terms of products, and service packs," he said. "No matter when it comes out, there's going to be more change in the market than most people expect."

                    N.Y. Lawmakers Target Modem Hijacking

State lawmakers unveiled a bill Monday that is believed to be the first in the nation to target modem hijacking, a practice in which thieves tap into people's computer modems to make international phone calls.

If passed, the law would allow telephone companies and the state attorney general to bring lawsuits against modem hijackers and their accomplices. The bill is expected to face a vote by the end of June.

The hijackers tap into people's modems by luring computer users to specific Web sites ? sometimes through e-mails ? where pop-up windows emerge inviting the user to click on them. The windows authorize the downloading of modem software that is then remotely accessed to make international calls that are charged back to the user.

"This is a new kind of thievery and it takes new kinds of law to deal with them," said Democratic Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, one of the bill's sponsors.

Verizon has begun investigating complaints from customers thought to be victims of modem hijacking, spokesman Cliff Lee said. He said the company also advises customers how to avoid the practice through consumer alerts and bill messages.

Consumers can fight hijacking by using a dedicated phone line for the computer dial-up connection, then blocking international calls to that line. Lawmakers said people should also install a firewall to block hackers and avoid unfamiliar Web sites, although some hijackers masquerade behind legitimate-sounding names.

New York's bill appears to be the first of its kind to target modem hijacking specifically, said Pam Greenberg of the National Conference of State Legislatures. Other states are considering similar, broader bills, she said.

Spyware Lawsuit Alleges Computer Hijacking

A recently filed class-action lawsuit against alleged spyware king DirectRevenue of New York claims that the company has deceptively downloaded harmful and offensive spyware to unsuspecting users' computers.

The suit, filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, alleges that DirectRevenue LLC "unlawfully used and damaged plaintiffs' computers to make money for themselves while willfully disregarding plaintiffs' rights to use and enjoy their personal property."

According to the suit, the spyware infiltrated users' computers to learn their Internet browsing habits and track their Internet use.

Further, the suit contends that DirectRevenue deceptively prevents users from removing its spyware, overwhelming computers with unsolicited advertisements.

DirectRevenue's business model is to pay independent distributors-often small companies that dropped out of the spam business or that develop peer-to-peer file sharing or screensavers-several cents per installation to install its software.

"Those guys love to bundle additional software that tracks what people are doing," said Benjamin Edelman, a researcher studying spyware and a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University.

"Sometimes we see that the affiliates that sign up design software that exploits security holes in Windows and Internet Explorer, and so as you are surfing a Web page, it installs the DirectRevenue software."

Sometimes, Edelman said, the way the company goes about its business is downright offensive.

In one video Edelman made last month, a DirectRevenue ad on Yahooligans, a children's Web site, showed an American Express ad, while the Cartoon Network's Web site showed a gambling ad.

Spyware has proliferated a great deal recent years, according to research from Meta Group Inc. (now part of Gartner) of Stamford, Conn.

Meta reports that spyware is one of the most significant Internet-based security threats today, representing up to 40 percent of help desk calls.

Meta Group predicts that spyware will continue to remain a serious problem until at least 2008.

The suit against DirectRevenue is somewhat different from other spyware cases, Edelman said, which have mainly been brought by Web sites protesting pop-up ads.

In one case, brought in 2002, the Washington Post and the New York Times sued the Gator online advertising network to stop the company from posting pop-ads on their Web sites without permission. The media outlets won that suit.

"This case is different, because it's about sneaking on to people's computers in truly underhanded ways," Edelman said.

"In some senses, though, that makes it an easier case. It's easy to prove that they are installing without permission. It's a lot like trespassing."

The case has a good chance of succeeding, Edelman said, and if it does, it should serve as a warning to others with similar business models. But more importantly, a win could open the floodgates for lawsuits against similar companies, he said.

"They should have been worried even before this case was filed, but they should be all the more worried now," he said.

Identity Thieves' New Ploy: 'Pharming'

First online crooks went ''phishing," and now they're getting into ''pharming" to reap their harvest of potential identity-theft victims.

Pharming is a new scam that automatically directs computer users from a legitimate Web site to a fraudulent copy of that site - without any warning signs. The fraudulent site collects passwords, credit card numbers or other private information for potential misuse.

Security experts say such attacks are rare so far but could grow in the coming months in much the same way phishing scams have exploded.

''It's almost entirely out of the user's hands. They're simply connecting to a Web site that they believe is a legitimate site," said Oliver Friedrichs, a senior manager for Cupertino security software maker Symantec's Security Response Center.

''If you look at phishing like you're pulling individual fish out of the ocean, pharming would be more like you're throwing a big net," said Friedrichs.

Some security experts think pharming is more sinister than phishing because it can be harder to detect.

Phishing uses e-mail spam to deliver fake messages, designed to look like they're coming from banks or other legitimate companies, to lure many individual customers into revealing personal or financial information.

Pharming operates through fake Web sites. But pharming cuts out the need for a response from the victim as required by phishing schemes, where the recipient of the scam e-mail must open the message and link to the bogus site.

Pharming exploits an underlying Internet technology - known as the Domain Name System, or DNS - used to translate a Web site's address into a numerical code for the Internet routing.

Pharming scams take several forms:

 2022; A hacker could break into an Internet service provider's DNS servers and switch legitimate addresses stored in the server's ''cache," a temporary holding area, with bogus addresses in a practice called ''DNS poisoning."

 2022; A scam artist could pretend to be a Web site's operator to persuade an Internet registrar to make the change to the bogus address in the registration database.

 2022; Attackers could use malicious code, such as a virus or Trojan program, planted on a user's PC to track keystrokes or change a computer's settings to take users to fraudulent copies of legitimate Web sites they request, said Gary Steele, chief executive officer of Cupertino e-mail security company Proofpoint.

 2022; Hackers could also target the 13 ''root" DNS servers that route all Internet traffic.

VeriSign of Mountain View operates two ''root" servers, handing 14.5 billion DNS queries a day for the .com and .net addresses it oversees. The company said security is tight on those servers, which are considered ''national IT assets" by the federal government.

AOL, with nearly 29 million members worldwide, said it protects customers by providing free anti-virus software and blocking known phishing sites. The company also has ''very comprehensive systems in place to prevent" any attacks against its DNS servers, said AOL spokesman Andrew Weinstein.

Peter Delgrosso, spokesman for United Online, which operates ISPs NetZero and Juno, said pharming was not yet a problem but that it ''certainly warrants our close attention."

The Anti-Phishing Working Group, an industry association, reported 13,141 new and unique phishing e-mail messages in February, up 2 percent from the month before. But the group has found ''very few" pharming attempts, limited to smaller ISP networks, said Dave Jevans, the group's chairman.

''This is not anywhere as big as phishing," he said of pharming. ''This requires technical sophistication."

Users may get tipped off they are on a pharming site because the log-in process or information will not look the same as on the legitimate site, said Christopher Faulkner, chief executive of Texas Web hosting company CI Host. He added that the scam sites most likely would ask users for

information, such as Social Security numbers, not normally required.

Other experts downplay the threat, but signs of pharming are popping up.

In March, attackers exploited a vulnerability in Symantec firewalls with DNS caching to redirect users typing in google.com, eBay.com and weather.com to three malicious sites, according to the Internet Storm Center security Web site. Symantec has issued a fix.

In a PC-based attack, the ''Troj/BankAsh-A" virus discovered in February displayed a fake log-in page or tracked keystrokes when users of the Microsoft Windows operating system accessed Web sites from certain banks in the United Kingdom, according to anti-virus company Sophos.

In September, a teenager in Germany hijacked the domain name for eBay's German site, ebay.de, in what may have been a prank, according to reports. EBay spokesman Hani Durzy called the threat ''very minor" but said the company is paying close attention to the issue.

Phillip Hallam-Baker, principal scientist at VeriSign, said potential damages from pharming depend on the level of response from those working with DNS technology.

''If we don't take DNS security seriously," he said, ''at some point we're going to get clobbered."

Judge Sentences Spammer to Nine Years

A North Carolina man convicted in the nation's first felony prosecution for spamming was sentenced Friday to nine years in prison, but the judge postponed the sentence while the case is appealed.

A jury had recommended the nine-year prison term after convicting Jeremy Jaynes of pumping out at least 10 million e-mails a day with the help of 16 high-speed lines, the kind of Internet capacity a 1,000-employee company would need.

Jaynes, 30, of Raleigh, will be free on $1 million bond until the appeals process concludes, which his lawyers estimate could take three or four years.

In deferring the prison time, Loudoun County Circuit Judge Thomas Horne acknowledged that the law targeting bulk e-mail distribution is new and could raise constitutional objections.

"I do not believe a person should go to prison for a law that is invalid," Horne said. "There are substantial legal issues that need to be brought before the appellate court."

Horne also said he might reconsider the sentence if Jaynes loses the appeal. The judge did not elaborate.

Jaynes was convicted in November for using false Internet addresses to send mass e-mail ads through an America Online Inc. server in northern Virginia. Under Virginia law, sending unsolicited bulk e-mail itself is not a crime unless senders masks their identities.

Prosecutors said Jaynes used the name "Gaven Stubberfield" and other aliases to peddle pornography and sham services such as a "FedEx refund processor." They described him as one of the world's top 10 spammers at the time of his arrest.

"We're satisfied that the court upheld what 12 citizens of Virginia determined was an appropriate sentence - nine years in prison," prosecutor Lisa Hicks-Thomas said.

Jaynes' attorney, David Oblon, argued that nine years was far too long given that Jaynes was charged as an out-of-state resident with violating a Virginia law that had taken effect just two weeks before. He planned to challenge the law's constitutionality along with its applicability to Jaynes.

A judge has ruled Maryland's anti-spam law unconstitutional because it seeks to regulate commerce outside the state's borders, though an appeals court in California and the Washington state Supreme Court have upheld state laws that had been declared unconstitutional by lower courts on grounds similar to the Dec. 9 ruling in Maryland.

"We have no doubt that we will win on appeal," Oblon said after the hearing. "Therefore any sentence is somewhat moot. Still, the sentence is not what we recommended and we're disappointed."

Jaynes declined through his attorneys to comment. He told Horne during the sentencing hearing that he never intended to cause harm and that, even if acquitted on appeal, "I can guarantee the court I will not be involved in the e-mail marketing business again."

Oblon said afterward that Jaynes wants out because "the legal process is very stressful, extremely expensive and very scary."

Indeed, prosecutors and the judge said the nine-year sentence was meant to deter others from sending illegal spam.

Jaynes' sister, Jessica DeGroot, was also convicted last year, but Horne overturned the conviction, saying he saw "no rational basis" for a conviction. A third person charged, Richard Rutkowski of Cary, N.C., was acquitted by the jury.

Many states have criminal laws against spam, but Virginia's makes it easier than others for prosecutors to obtain a felony conviction, which carries more jail time than a misdemeanor, said Quinn Jalli of the online marketing firm Digital Impact.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers differ on the degree to which Jaynes profited from spamming. Jaynes indicated on a pre-sentence report that his net income over his lifetime amounts to less than $5 million, including legitimate business ventures like a restaurant and fitness club.

Hicks-Thomas noted that Jaynes has been renting a $2,700-per-month home in a country club community to meet a requirement that he stay in Loudoun County while on bond.

"We believe the defendant is worth well over $4 (million) to $5 million," Hicks-Thomas said.

New Version of MSN Messenger Released

In its latest bid to make money on free Internet services, Microsoft Corp. is betting that consumers will be willing to use their instant messaging identities as billboards for products ranging from Sprite to Adidas sneakers.

The newest version of MSN Messenger instant messaging product, released late Wednesday, allows consumers to download free backgrounds, pictures and other content tied to specific ad campaigns. The hope is that users will then share those downloads with other consumers - providing another boost to advertisers, who pay Microsoft for the privilege.

Blake Irving, a corporate vice president with Microsoft's MSN online unit, said the company hopes to attract users who are so taken by the advertising campaigns that they choose to associate themselves with the brand - much like a person might buy a Starbucks Corp. coffee mug.

Microsoft is launching the program with German sportswear maker Adidas Salomon-AG and Sprite, made by Coca-Cola Co.

Analyst Charlene Li with Forrester Research said Yahoo Inc.'s messaging service has been providing a similar service for some time. She expects such tactics to be successful with brand brands like Nike Inc. or PepsiCo Inc.'s Mountain Dew that people think are cool.

"The fact of the matter is people have very strong affinities for brands," she said.

Irving said the company also is expanding other advertising functions. That includes gearing ads to users it believes are of a certain age or gender, or who live in a specific area. The company also will begin putting text ads at the bottom of instant messaging screens.

Microsoft also is releasing the official first version of MSN Spaces, a free personal Web journal system that debuted in test form in December. As part of an advertising campaign, Ford Motor Co.'s Volvo Cars of North America is debuting its own "space" that will solicit commentary from Volvo loyalists. Irving said Volvo will have editorial control of the posts.

Li said such sites represent the future of corporate blogging, in which "customers do the marketing for them."

The moves come as companies search for new ways to reach consumers who are increasingly avoiding ads on television and elsewhere.

"It's getting harder and harder to reach people, so the appeal of something like a messenger is that it's putting the marketer into places where you couldn't see them before," Li said.

Philadelphia Plans First U.S. Citywide Wi-Fi Network

The city of Philadelphia will become the largest U.S. Internet "hot spot" next year under a plan to offer wireless access at about half the cost charged by commercial operators, city officials said on Thursday.

Last year, officials unveiled a pilot scheme offering users of Wi-Fi-enabled computers access to the Internet within a radius of about a mile of downtown's Love Park. Thursday's announcement expands the network to the city's entire 135-square-mile area, marking a U.S. first.

The "Wireless Philadelphia" network is expected to be up by late summer 2006 and available to computer users paying up to $20 a month. Commercial Wi-Fi services run about $40 monthly.

"People are watching all over the world to determine whether a city of 135 square miles can become one big hot spot," Philadelphia Mayor John Street told reporters.

"People want to be connected and we think it is our obligation to provide that kind of access," Street said.

The network, based on devices attached to city streetlight poles, is expected to cost the city $15 million to set up.

The service will cost subscribers from $16 to $20 a month and will be available through a device costing about $80, city chief information officer Dianah Neff said.

The city hopes the plan will get 80 percent of Philadelphia households connected to the Internet within five years, up from the current level of 58 percent.

City officials estimate it will create 3,000 jobs, mostly by creating the type of city attractive to tech-savvy people who want to be connected to the Internet at all times.

The plan is opposed by some city lawmakers who say the network will cost more to build than estimated and that the work should be given to telecom companies such as Verizon Communications or Comcast Corp.

City councilman Frank Rizzo said the city government does not have the expertise or the money to embark on the project when it is cutting jobs and services to balance its budget.

"I would love to see Philadelphia wireless, but it's not the government's job to do it," Rizzo told Reuters.

But Gene Kimmelman, senior director for public policy at Consumers Union, a consumer watchdog group, said the plan will provide Internet access to low- and moderate-income communities for about half the rate charged by phone and cable companies, and will break what he called their monopolistic practices.

"The government has every business assuring the provision of essential services to all its citizens, and in today's world having access to the Internet is as important as keeping your house or feeding your family," Kimmelman said.

He said Philadelphia's costing is realistic and predicted that the program will be copied throughout the United States once it has proven workable.

"It is an extremely important program, and we have every reason to believe it will go ahead," he said.

Can the Internet Have Borders?

The Internet, as we've heard time after time, is borderless. That means that some of the material people publish online will be legal in some places and illegal in others. America faces this problem every day when offshore gambling operations run Web sites that are available to anyone here, even though they're illegal. Laws also vary from state to state: You can order wine from an out-of-state winery in some states, but not others.

Not to continue picking on Paris - after all, Random Access bought an "aller retour" ticket to France this week - but insisting that French law apply to a distant corner of the Internet, just because you can access it from inside French borders, raises tough questions about online freedom.

Consider Yahoo Inc.'s continuing troubles with naughty Nazis auctioning their paraphernalia online. The latest twist in this ongoing tale is in Yahoo's favor. A French appeals court yesterday cleared the company's former president and chief executive, Tim Koogle, of charges that he violated French law by allowing Nazi and racist items to be sold through its U.S. auction site.

"The former Yahoo! chief executive had been taken to court by the Association of Auschwitz Deportees, a group of survivors of the infamous Nazi death camp," Agence France-Presse reported. "Koogle had risked a fine of [46,000 euros, or about $49,150] and five years' imprisonment if found guilty of the first charge, and a [1,500 euro] fine for the second." ZDNet's France staff reported that the association, along with the Mouvement Contre le Racisme et Pour l'Amiti des Peoples (Movement Against Racism and for Understanding Between Peoples), accused Yahoo of "justifying war crimes and crimes against humanity" by allowing the auctions. (The groups sued Koogle because they could not sue the entire company.)

This wouldn't be such a big deal in the United States, where the Constitution affords freedom of speech protections even to Nazis, but it violates France's law against hate speech. Yahoo, based in California, does not allow such material to show up on its French Web site but that doesn't stop anyone in France from typing in http://www.yahoo.com and searching the American site. Not only that, the Yahoo France site contains a direct link to the English pages.

Nevertheless, the court said Koogle could not be held responsible for what was sold on the site's auction pages.

That case, which was filed in 2000, probably will come to a close in France, but it will drag on in the United States. Here's why, according to the Associated Press: In 2001, French courts started fining Yahoo more than $13,000 for each day that it did not remove racist auction items from its U.S. Web site. The company, the AP said, now theoretically owes $5 million. A U.S. federal judge in 2002 ruled that Yahoo faced the possibility of lawsuits because being available worldwide meant running the risk of violating some countries' laws. An appeals court panel reversed that decision in August, but said in February that it would rehear some arguments this spring, the AP said.

France's appeals court ruled correctly that Koogle should not be held liable for the auctions. The appeals court, meanwhile, should toss out the lawsuit against Google.

France must find a way to deal with the fact that in the United States we have every right to believe in and buy merchandise that appeals to people who ought to be locked up and fed bread and water for the rest of their lives (on days when we're feeling generous). France cannot stop its Jean-Marie Le Pen wannabes or its legions of boneheaded Holocaust revisionists and racists from visiting Web sites in other countries and getting hold of contraband material. What it can do is keep fighting the good fight on the ground. Right-wing extremists have a habit of taking to the streets and making asses of themselves. It'll be Hitler's birthday in a few days and they'll all come out to goosestep in various places around Europe. If that violates the law, round them up, put them on trial, stick them in jail.

Meanwhile in America, e-commerce corporations should search for racist material and expunge it from their sites. It can be done and it is worth doing, but asking a court to outlaw free speech is asking for trouble.

The New York Daily News in an editorial Monday encouraged a tax revolt: "It's tax season again, and millions of New Yorkers are preparing to be scofflaws. They're going to fill in Line 56 on the state's long-form tax return or Line 27 on the short form by reporting that they made no out-of-state purchases, over the Internet, by catalog or in person, in 2004. Most will be lying. And good for them, we say. Don't pay this tax."

The Daily News noted that Gov. George E. Pataki (R) vetoed the addition of a line to tax returns that required people to report their out-of-state purchases but that the legislature overruled him. It also listed some notable names of people who on their tax returns claimed to have made no Internet, catalog or out-of-state purchases in 2004: Pataki, Lt. Gov. Mary Donohue (R) and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer (D). I thought Spitzer spent all his time online.

How would you like to walk through a cemetery with a remote control, occasionally zapping graves to launch a video reel on a flat-screen television embedded in the headstone so you can get the edited highlights of someone's life? That's San Mateo, Calif., inventor Robert Barrows's vision of the graveyard of the future. The Wall Street Journal reported that Barrows has filed a patent for a weatherproof, hollowed-out tombstone that will include the TV and a microchip.

While one could ponder the transitory nature of life, the permanent nature of death requires more thought than we tend to give to our high-tech communications, one source told the Journal: "Whether you'll be putting words, symbols or videos on your tombstone, 'you've got to think long term, very long term,' says Chris Epting, a pop-culture historian. 'Today, everything is so from-the-hip. We fire off e-mails and the next day look at them and say, "Why did I send that?" You can't do that on a tombstone.'"

This is off-topic for a technology column, but read on. The Journal also quoted Paul DiMatteo, who tries to help people think twice about the memorials they want to leave for their loved ones: One family, "having lost a loved one in a commercial fishing accident, wanted an etching of a hand coming out of water, pulling down a boat. Mr. DiMatteo talked them out of it by saying, 'When you go to the cemetery, you should remember the happy times.' ... One man recently had him carve this simple epitaph: 'Thanks for stopping by.'"

Got absolutely nothing to do Saturday? Spend it glued to your Webcam presentation of the wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles. The BBC today reported that British firm Network Webcams is setting up two

cameras near the Windsor Guildhall where the nuptials will take place. "Royal wedding fever has already begun online as people trade memorabilia and bid for the best view of proceedings," the Beeb reported. "Various media outlets have offered up to [5,000 pounds] to local hotels and other buildings in order to set up cameras on roofs. On auction site e-Bay, a shopfront in Windsor has been offered for hire for the day."

A new study suggests that I might suffer some abuse from my coworkers if I admitted to not only knowing, but liking that song. Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Palo Alto Research Center found that sharing iTunes music libraries on an office network "turns out to be something like a peacock spreading his feathers for display," CNET's News.com reported.

From News.com: "I just went through [my playlist] and said, 'I wonder what kind of image this is ... giving me,'" reported one of the study's subjects. "I just went through it to see if there was stuff that would be ... annoying, that I would not like people to know that I had." I could take some potshots, but I don't want to risk the taunts over my well-documented Jacques Brel fixation.

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